

New bill in Congress targets rising price of milk

■ Simmons joins an effort for regional dairy compacts.

Norwich Bulletin

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Faced with rising retail milk prices and a struggling dairy industry in eastern Connecticut, U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, added his name today to a bipartisan list of co-sponsors of the "Dairy Consumers and Producers Protection Act of 2003," H.R. 324.

The bill proposes to reauthorize the Northeastern Dairy Compact, which aims to keep retailers from

overcharging consumers and sets a floor on the wholesale price of milk, which has consistently fallen in real terms over the past three decades.

"One quarter of our land in eastern Connecticut is in use for agriculture," Simmons said.

"We must protect our farmers, not only to ensure our own access to fresh dairy products but also to retain our rural and agricultural character," he said.

The bill would establish dairy compacts in the Northeast, South, Northwest and Intermountain areas.

These groups would have the authority to set minimum wholesale prices on milk, protecting the farmer from large market fluctuations.

The compacts also require local producers to ensure a stable, local supply of milk as a matter of regional economic importance, keeping retail prices stable.